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Jack Anderson

Agents Eavesdrop for South Africa

South African agents slipped into closed congressional briefings and obtained unauthorized information twice last month.

On Jan. 18, an uninvited official of the South African embassy attended a State Department briefing. The session was restricted to members of Congress and their staffs.

Again on Jan. 31, an employee of a law firm representing South Africa posed as a congressional aide to get into another off-the-record briefing.

The first incident may have been inadvertent; the second was deliberate. One Justice Department source told us the second eavesdropping "could be a potential violation" of U.S. espionage laws. Another source called the incident "morally wrong" but said it didn't appear to violate the laws governing foreign lobbyists.

The first briefing was arranged by Reps. Thomas Downey (D-N.Y.), Andrew Maguire (D-N.J.) and Edward Markey (D-Mass.). After they learned about the uninvited guest, they joined in writing a sharp, private letter to South African Ambassador Donald Sole.

"We believe that your staff has seriously deceived the Ad Hoc Committee by attending our meeting," complained the congressmen. "We also believe that your staffer leaked portions of the meeting to pro-government press in South Africa. Both actions were reprehensible."

The ambassador responded that his aide "arrived at the meeting long after it started" and "heard no announcement that the meeting was closed." The details were furnished to South African

newspapers, wrote the Ambassador, "in response to enquiries" and "in good faith."

Two weeks later, the newspaper editor who fled South Africa, Donald Woods, appeared behind closed doors on Capitol Hill to testify about abuses by the South African government.

Because of the earlier security breach, extra precautions were taken. Access to the hearing room was restricted to one door, and a sign was posted at the door that the briefing was closed.

Inside, an aide to Downey noticed a young woman tape recording Woods' confidential remarks. The aide asked the woman to identify herself. She produced a congressional ID card, identifying herself as Eva Neterowicz from the office of Rep. Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.).

It was later determined that she left Rostenkowski's office in October, 1977, and joined the law firm of deKieffer and Associates. The firm is registered as an agent for South Africa and is paid approximately \$150,000 annually for legal and lobbying work. Neterowicz is assigned to the South African account.

A spokesman for the firm said that he was aware of the incident and that Neterowicz has been reprimanded. All employees of the firm have been instructed to represent themselves correctly, the spokesman said.

The three congressmen, meanwhile, have written Sole a second letter, declaring: "Clearly your Washington representatives have acted contrary to your assurances and have committed a major political blunder."

At the South African embassy, a

spokesman said the ambassador stands by the first letter he wrote to the congressmen. This states that embassy officials are not authorized to attend closed meetings and would not attempt to do so.

Korean Coup?—Congressional investigators are trying to get their hands on some old intelligence documents, which described the Korean bribery operation years before the Justice Department got around to investigating it.

The secret documents also reported that most South Korean military leaders expected President Park Chung Hee to retire in 1975 but would not depose him if he decided to stay on.

In a secret report barred from foreign dissemination, the Central Intelligence Agency quoted an inside source as saying: "The majority of the military leaders believed Park would step down in 1975 . . . If Park decides to continue, [the source] believed that the President would receive very little military or public support."

Nevertheless, the CIA informant "emphasized that a military coup against the Park regime would not succeed. He explained that the military commanders in and around the Seoul area were strong supporters of the president. Therefore, any attempted anti-Park coup would immediately be quelled.

"[The source] thought that a 'loyal' coup was possible. However, it would have to be done with the president's approval. In any event, the results would not be popularly supported by the military or the people."

This secret assessment, which dates back five years, is still considered by our source to be sound.